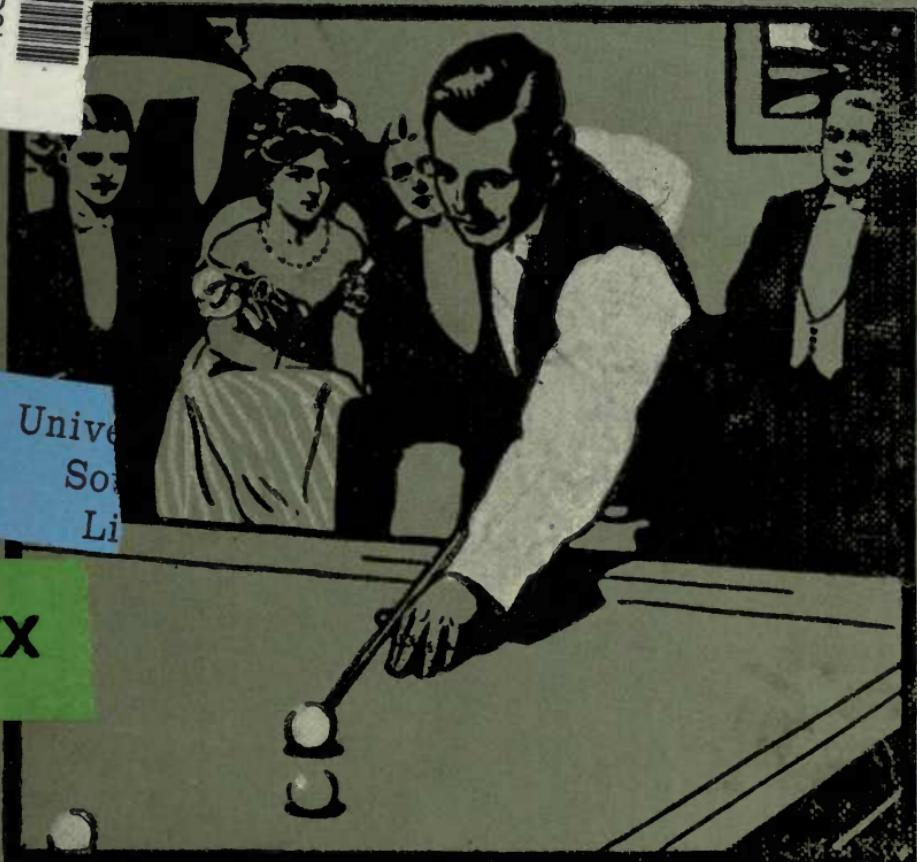


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BY WALLACE RITCHIE



WITH A PREFACE BY
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PREFACE

I HAVE had an opportunity of reading the manuscript of the present book, and I must certainly say that the principles laid down therein are thoroughly sound, and such as are calculated to be of the greatest benefit to any student of the game of billiards. Personally, I must confess that the amount of advantage I have derived through reading books on billiards is quite infinitesimal in quantity, but this probably is best accounted for by the fact that at the time I was learning the game no books of any special value on the subject were published. Billiards, at the time of which I am speaking, held quite a different position from that which it holds to-day. It had not then been reduced to the fine art which it may now be justly considered. In the days of my novitiate the implements of the game were not nearly so perfect as they are at the present date, the manufacture of tables specially having advanced a very long stride since then. There were, no doubt, some fine players at that period, and, considering the disadvantages under which they laboured, I think, speaking relatively and taking into consideration the more primitive state of the table and other implements that then existed, they compared most favourably with any of

the present-day exponents of the game. Nothing could possibly excel, for example, the delicacy of touch possessed by the late William Cook, or the really wonderful cue-mastery of the elder John Roberts.

But it is more with regard to the general state of the game, than merely the professional phase of it, that billiards has progressed so tremendously since the time when I first put hand to cue. I think I should be quite safe in saying that for every table in use then more than a hundred are in use now, especially if we take undersized tables also into account. Consequently the number of amateur players may likewise be said to have increased a hundred-fold. Not only, too, has this important amateur element advanced with respect to numbers, but it has likewise made a very considerable improvement regarding quality of play. Twenty or twenty-five years ago it was quite a rare thing to go into a billiard room and see a break of over thirty made. Now there is scarcely one out of the thousands of clubs and other places where billiards is the chief or sole amusement, which has not several players connected with it who have quite a sound knowledge of the game, and who are capable of occasionally making a fifty or sixty break. One of our leading amateurs, Major Fleming, recently made a sequence of 153 off the red ball alone (the white being on the table the whole of the time), and this fact in itself is sufficient to prove to what an extent non-professional play has advanced during late years.

What is the cause of this? Principally, I should say, the increased means which are now available for securing

a knowledge of the game. First-class personal tuition can now be obtained in almost any large town, at charges which are not at all prohibitive. Matches of the highest order are of very frequent occurrence, and nothing, I may here say, is more instructive than to watch a good player. And then, last but not least, there is now quite a multiplicity of literature on the subject, which, without the slightest doubt, must very materially help in enabling the player to attain a degree of proficiency in far less time than would otherwise be requisite.

With regard to the present book on billiards, its object is evidently to present every phase of the game in as short and concise a way as possible. The pupil is spared that mass of unnecessary detail which detracts from, rather than adds to, the merits of many works on the subject. Where every point of the game is entered into in all its varying aspects, and where everything is said that it is possible to say, it can be easily understood that the student becomes confused instead of enlightened, and in the end is bored instead of interested. But here everything is explained in the fewest possible words and at the same time in the clearest possible manner. Nothing is omitted or left to conjecture, and yet the labours of the pupil are immensely lightened by the fact that nothing extraneous is introduced and only that which is absolutely essential is included. Speaking in general terms, I certainly believe that the publication of this little book will do much by way of still further popularizing the game and to assist the ordinary amateur to extend still more his standard of excellence. The

book is precisely such as will appeal to that vast multitude of lovers of billiards who, while having an earnest desire to improve themselves, have, at the same time, but comparatively little leisure at their disposal. Billiards is perhaps the most difficult of all games of skill, and therefore demands from those who wish to excel at it an amount of attention which is by no means small, and which is often greater than the amateur is in a position to devote to it. To all such, then, any means by which the labours of study may be considerably curtailed must necessarily be extremely welcome, and I feel that the publication of this book will thus be gratefully received by the large billiard-playing public. I am convinced that the tenets here propounded are in every way sound, and that any student of the game, whether he be quite a beginner or whether he has already had considerable experience, will learn much by carefully perusing these pages, and by putting into practice all the principles therein dealt with. After all, nothing but sheer hard work and continual practice can avail in the production of any degree of perfection, but when the pupil's efforts are directed on correct lines, such as an adherence to the course of instruction here laid down will ensure, the labour will be reduced to the lowest possible point, and many years of hard work will be saved.

From what I have said it will be seen that I attach but comparatively little weight to the theoretical aspect of the game. No doubt it is of advantage to know why everything is done, and what are the effects of all the various causes, and the causes of all the various effects;

but, beyond being interesting, I think theory has but very little actual utility. Without the slightest knowledge of the science of trigonometry I still know pretty well what direction a ball will take after striking one or more cushions; and although I may be told in the profoundest manner, and may be quite willing to admit, that the angle of reflection is approximately equal to the angle of incidence, I certainly never stop to meditate upon this weighty precept when actually making a shot, but rather rely upon my intuitive knowledge to tell me what course a ball will take after I have struck it.

There are one or two points upon which I should like to take this opportunity of making a few brief remarks, and to which I would wish to draw the special attention of the reader. In the first place, the author is perfectly right in attaching so much importance to what he terms the preliminary matters. There can be no doubt that much more than is generally supposed depends upon a firm and yet perfectly easy attitude at the table, and the same remark applies to the formation of a good, steady bridge. No freedom of the cue-arm can be obtained if any portion of the body is in a cramped or awkward or unstable position, and this freedom of cue action is one of the greatest aids to success. Then again, unless there be perfectly true cue-delivery, that is to say, unless the cue maintains to a nicety its line of direction right up to the finish of the stroke, the shot is bound to be defective. However true the aim may be, if that aim be not adhered to until the ball is actually struck, the stroke will fail just as much as if the aim had been faulty.

Much of this trueness of cue-delivery depends upon the immovability of the bridge, which should, therefore, be as firm as a rock; and yet how often do we see the amateur just lay his bridge hand loosely on the table, using no muscular action whatever to ensure its firmness.

Then with regard to taking aim, our author again does well to lay so much stress upon the advantage to be derived from getting well down to the work, and from taking the sight along as much of the length of the cue as is practicable. I have noticed many players make shots while standing nearly upright. Sometimes, of course, the shot will succeed, and sometimes even a fair game will be played in this attitude; but I look upon it as more by good luck than by good play that a shot is successful under such circumstances, and I am sure that if any player can score well when posing in such an imperfect and disadvantageous way, he would be able to score very much better if he adopted a more common-sense attitude.

For the ordinary player it is doubtless the better plan for him, when addressing his ball, to aim the point of his cue exactly at the spot on the cue-ball which he intends to strike. Personally I do not adopt this plan, as previously to striking my ball I invariably place my cue-tip right down on to the bed of the table, no matter where I intend ultimately hitting my ball. I do not know that I derive any advantage in doing this; in fact, it is more a habit with me than done with the idea of gaining any benefit. Some years ago I used to watch a good deal and play a little with the late Hugh McNeill, and as he

had adopted this plan I also dropped into it, imagining probably, that by emulating his ways I might also acquire some of his excellence of play.

Another feature of my own play which has been remarked upon is the almost total absence of those preliminary movements of the cue known as addressing the ball. There is just the very minutest quiver of the cue, sometimes almost imperceptible to the onlooker, and then the stroke is delivered. Here again it is more habit than anything else, for I certainly do not attach any importance to this idiosyncrasy, and should not advise anyone to imitate it.

In this book much is said with regard to the supreme significance of a thorough mastery of the plain half-ball shot, and quite rightly so. There is no stroke in the whole game that is anything like so important; in fact, I do not think I should be far wrong were I to say that this shot is of more practical utility than everything else combined. A good and reliable half-ball player will, as Mr Ritchie says, be very hard to beat, provided that, in addition to accuracy in making the stroke, he combines with it the ability to play with good strength.

This brings me to the vital question of playing for position. Whatever the pupil does, he should never make a shot without having previously considered in his mind what the following shot shall be, and what strength he is to use in order to leave the desired placing of the balls. The cleverest stroke player in the world can never be depended upon to make breaks of any magnitude, and it is this, of course, which really constitutes success.

The stroke player may be very interesting to watch and one is bound to admire his cleverness and ingenuity in getting out of difficulties; he will also probably win the most applause. But when it comes to the matter of winning matches, it is the less showy but more reliable position player who generally comes in first. I find that a special chapter is given in the present book on position play, and I would strongly recommend the pupil to weigh very carefully what is said therein.

I do not know that there is any further point to which I wish to draw attention, so I will now leave the book to speak for itself. In conclusion, I will merely say that if the pupil really wishes to be able to play a good game, and to secure this excellence in the shortest possible space of time, he certainly cannot do better than adopt the course of study and practice here laid down, and which is explained in detail in the last chapter of the book.

EDWARD DIGGLE.

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INTRODUCTION

IN the first place I wish it to be understood that the present brief treatise in no way professes to be a complete manual on the game of billiards. There are already several very excellent works which go most fully and thoroughly into both the theoretical and practical aspects of the game, so that any attempt to go over the same ground again would, in my opinion, be entirely superfluous, and of no appreciable value. What I have essayed to do is merely to emphasize those points which experience has shown me to be of real importance, to introduce a few valuable features which in my billiard career I have come one by one to discover, and which I have personally found to be of the most essential service, and to present the several phases of the game in a new and, I trust, improved shape and form. Though merely an amateur lover of the game, and by no means a brilliant technical exponent, I may at any rate say that I have myself had the benefit of good and sound professional tuition, and in a somewhat considerable practical experience have been able to find out for myself many things which no book has taught, and no direct tuition imparted, and yet which it is absolutely necessary to be known by every one who aspires to the position of a player above the average.

These points I here give, fully believing that a strict observance of what I recommend will save the ordinary amateur much time and trouble, and feeling convinced that, if conscientiously adopted, they will enable many a player who might otherwise never get beyond the standard of the every-day twenty-to-thirty break man to attain the enviable position of one who can occasionally knock up his sixty or seventy points, and at times even a hundred.

It must not be imagined, however, that this degree of proficiency can be attained without considerable help on the part of the student himself. The information I give, though no doubt valuable, will be of but little service unless it be put into intelligent practice. I would strongly advise every one, therefore, who really wishes to excel, not merely to read and study the book carefully, but also to begin at the beginning and put into absolute practice every point brought forward. To even those who already possess a fair knowledge of the game I would say, commence at the beginning again and compel yourself to master every detail I give just as thoroughly as the veriest novice would have to do, being in no undue haste to get ahead, but thoroughly mastering each section before proceeding to the next. Only in this way will a good, solid style be acquired and will the player be able to get rid of faults already possessed, and which, if retained, must inevitably prevent him ever becoming above the ordinary. Many will doubtless think that some of the matter which I introduce is of no real importance, and that an exact and perfunctory observance of it is un-

necessary. To those I would most emphatically reply that no single item I give is unimportant, however simple it may appear, and nothing but a strict performance of my instructions can produce an adequate advantage. I have been at considerable pains to make the work as short and as concise as possible, and to include only that which is absolutely essential. I have taken the trouble to spare the pupil in every way it could be done without its being to his detriment, and to save him all needless labour. It now only remains for him to perform his part of the contract and to honestly do his share by giving fair and straightforward attention to my suggestions. If this is not done, his only will be the fault, and he alone will be to blame if he remains in the rut; but if this *is* done the good result is bound to follow—success is certain. A little determination, a little strength of mind—these alone are necessary to enable him to in a few months easily beat players who can beat him now—to win where he formerly lost.

It will probably seem strange to many that a book on billiards should not include diagrams, but for the purpose I have in view these are not at all necessary. There are plenty of books already published which give diagrams almost without end, and which deal with the game from this aspect, and I would say that this little book is in no way intended as a substitute for these more pretentious works, but rather as collateral testimony, and to be studied in conjunction with them. I would like to mention here that the work, in two volumes, by J. P. Mannock is the most complete I know on the subject of billiards,

while that of Riso Levi, in three books, also very fully describes the various strokes of the game.

It will no doubt be noticed that on more than one occasion I have repeated myself almost word for word. This must not be looked upon as the unpardonable fault of authorship it is usually rightly considered, for here it is quite intentional, my object being to impress the points the more seriously upon the student's attention.

In concluding this introduction, I would recommend that the student should first read the whole of the book carefully once or twice, and should then follow out the 'Method of Practice' which I have given at the end.

BILLIARDS SIMPLIFIED

PRELIMINARY WORK

BEFORE attempting to strike a ball it is of the utmost importance that you should first thoroughly master several points which, although in themselves simple enough, must on no account be evaded or passed over with indifference. These points I now proceed to notice.

ATTITUDE

ACORRECT and easy attitude is most essential to good play. For ordinary strokes the position of the body must be as follows:

The feet must be placed about twelve inches apart the right foot being behind the left. The left foot points almost directly in a line with the direction of the cue, the right foot being at an angle of about forty-five degrees to the left. The left leg must be slightly bent at the knee, while the right is kept perfectly straight and rigid, so as to support the main weight of the body. The body is bent at the hips, the chin being brought down to within about six inches of the cue, and immediately above it. The left, or bridge arm, must be extended perfectly straight, and the

right, or cue arm, must be bent at the elbow at right angles. A firm but unrestrained attitude must be retained during the whole of the stroke, the feet being planted fixedly on the floor, so that while striking there shall be no movement of any part whatever of the body or legs, the right fore-arm alone moving.

The following illustrations give the correct attitude for all ordinary strokes. The attitude for striking a ball under a cushion, when using the rest, and for other exceptional shots will, of course, vary, and can be best learnt by watching and copying the play of professionals or good amateur performers. At first it will only be necessary for the student to practise in the attitude shown in Plates I and II.



Plate I (to face p. 2)



Plate II

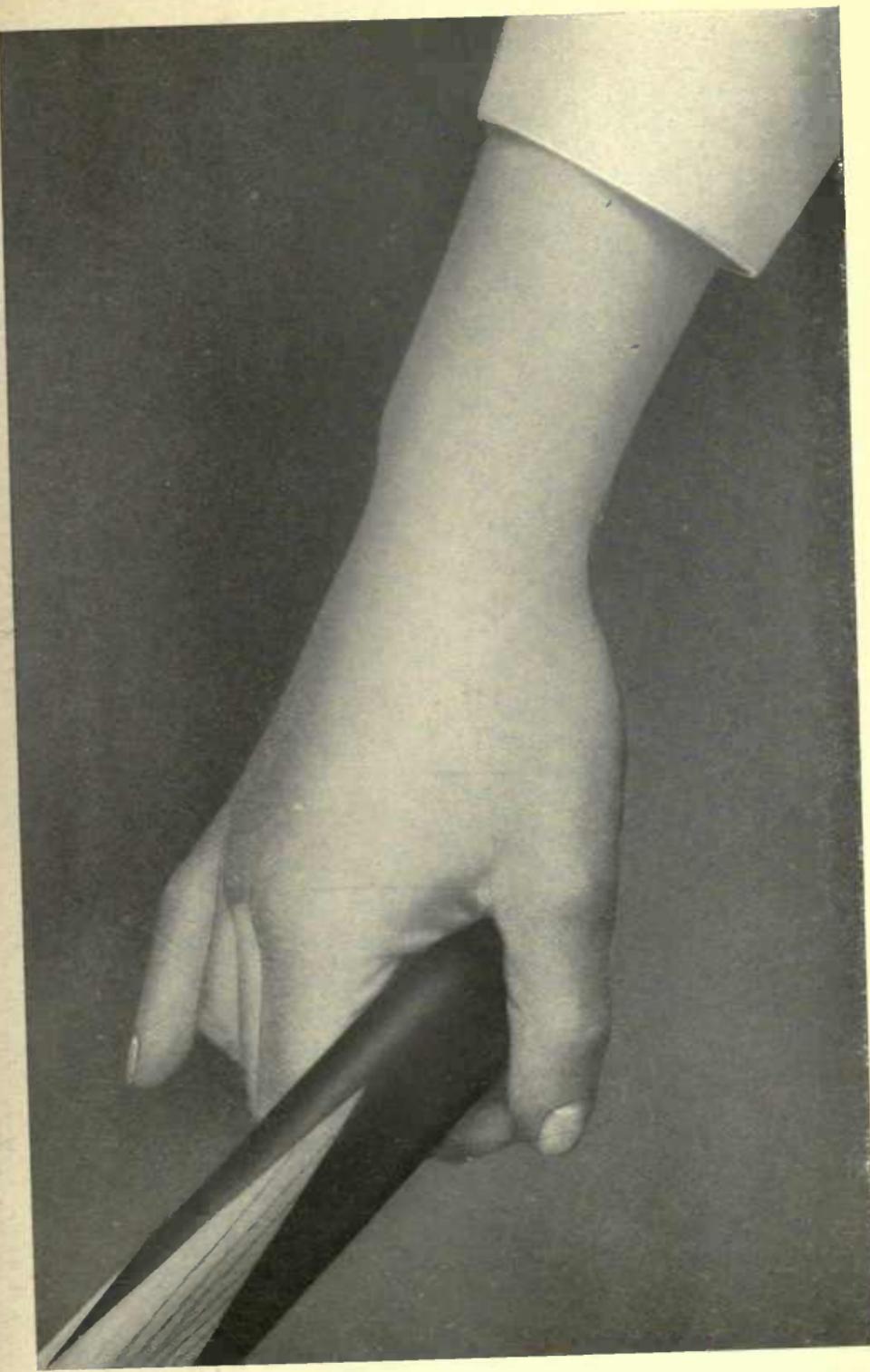


Plate III



Plate IV

HOLDING THE CUE

THE cue must be held extremely loosely, by allowing it to lie in the loop which is formed by bringing the tips of the first and second fingers into contact with the inside of the top joint of the thumb. Just the very slightest pressure in the world must be applied to prevent the cue from slipping, but otherwise than this the cue must lie in the looped fingers, just the same as a stone lies in a sling. For ordinary shots there must, as stated, be only the very faintest pressure of the fingers, for it is of the greatest importance that the cue should be held very loosely, and that there is not the slightest approach to that gripping which is so characteristic of the inferior player, and so fatal to good play. Even in the hardest of forcing shots the cue must not be gripped but must be held quite loosely.

The cue must be held a few inches from its butt end. The shorter the player, the further from the end must the cue be held, for it is necessary, while holding the cue in position on the bridge, that the right fore-arm should hang down from the elbow in a perfectly straight line, and not be inclined at an angle. A tall man needs a longer cue than a short man.

Plates III and IV illustrate this point:

THE BRIDGE

THE formation of a correct bridge is a point of the utmost importance, though one to which the ordinary amateur appears to attach but little significance. Nothing conduces to good play more than a good bridge, and nothing so plainly marks the player as an untaught novice than a bad one.

In forming a bridge the hand must be placed *firmly*, and not loosely or limply, upon the table. Only the root of the thumb near the wrist, and the tips of the fingers, must touch the table. The fingers must be kept straight and a small space allowed between them. The direction of the fingers should be at an angle pointing away from the body and from the line of the cue, and the knuckles of the fingers which join them to the hand should be brought as high up from the table as possible. The thumb should either be raised so that its top joint projects from the first finger, or should be bent so that its point meets the bottom joint of the first finger. The former mode is the more suitable for those with a long thumb, the latter for those with a shorter thumb.

Special care must be taken to avoid a fault so common with the ordinary amateur, i.e. that of allowing the left, or little finger edge of the hand, or the corresponding part

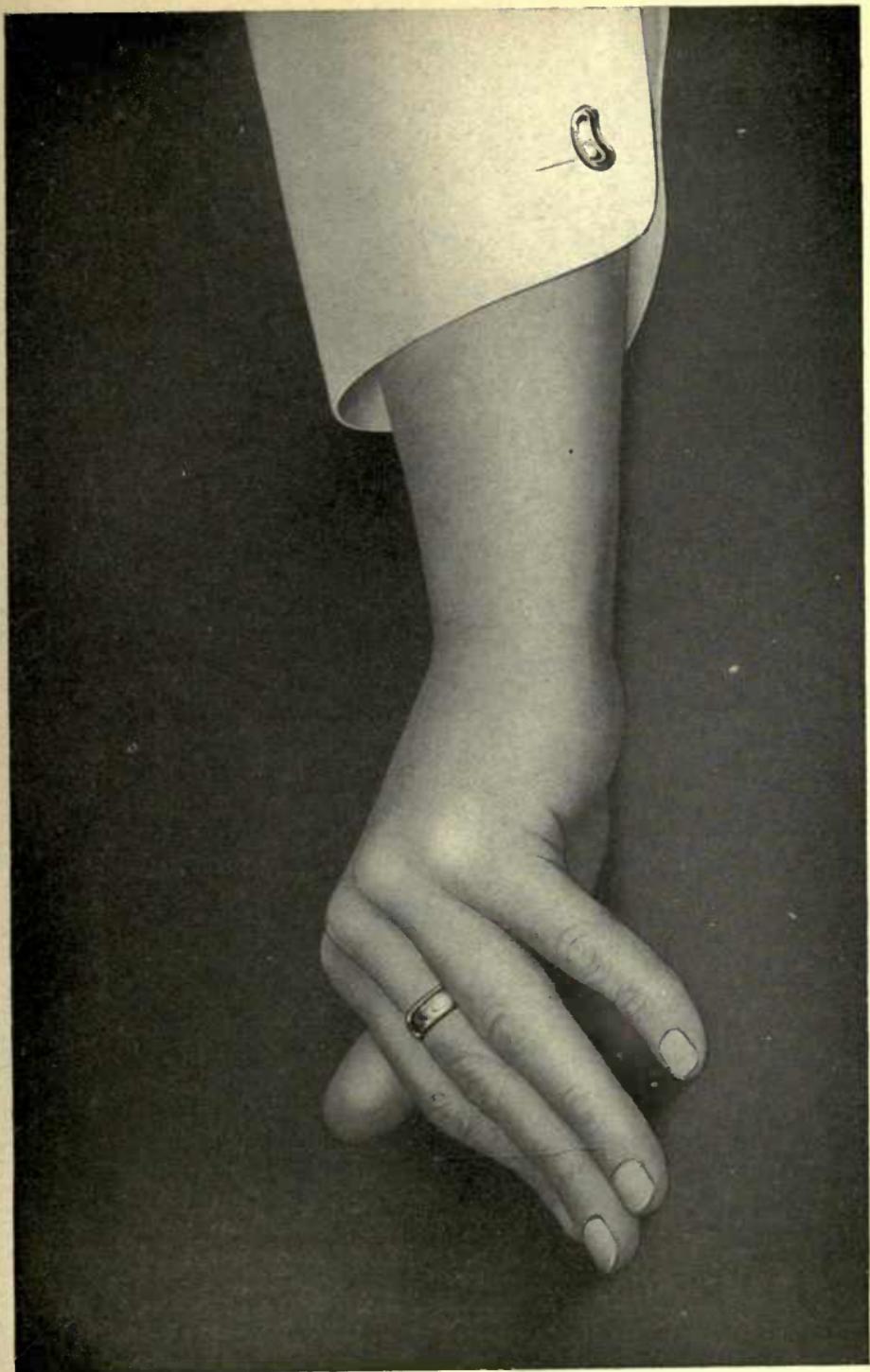


Plate V (to face p. 4



Plate VI

of the wrist, to rest on the table. These parts must be distinctly raised, so that a space exists between them and the cloth. The hand forming the bridge should be placed the correct distance from the ball, viz., from eight to ten inches. A shorter bridge must inevitably prevent the necessary freedom of the cue, and a longer one is bound to introduce the undesirable and dangerous element of unsteadiness of cue action. The length of the bridge varies according to the nature of the stroke, screws, for instance, requiring a much shorter bridge than ordinary shots. Correct bridges are illustrated in plates V and VI.

CUE ACTION

ONE of the most vital points in billiards is a correct action of the cue in making the stroke. Upon this depends not only the proper hitting of the cue-ball, but also the accuracy of the line of aim, and if there is fault in either of these two points good play is absolutely impossible.

In moving the cue backwards and forwards on the bridge a perfectly straight course must be observed. The portion of the cue which extends beyond the bridge must move in an absolutely straight line; there must not be the very faintest sign of wobbling, and the point of the cue must remain at precisely the same distance from the cloth during the whole of the shot. It has often been said with truth that the action of the cue must exactly resemble that of the piston-rod of a steam engine, the slightest divergence from the straight path, either horizontally or vertically being fatal. Too much stress cannot be placed upon the immense value of a good steady cue action, and it will be time well spent if the student devotes his entire attention to this one point for a week or more. That pump-handle and uneven cue action of which most amateurs are guilty, is one of the very worst faults, and if possessed should be got out of at once at any cost of time

and trouble. Some amateurs have the pump-handle action and yet succeed in playing a fair game, and two first-class professionals distinctly possess this attribute, though they would scarcely like to be told so; but, nevertheless, it is undoubtedly a grave fault, and anything but good form.

ADDRESSING THE BALL

BEFORE striking the ball the player must invariably make a few preliminary backward and forward movements with the cue, which is known as "addressing the ball." The object of this is four-fold; firstly, to get a steady balance of the cue; secondly, to ensure striking the cue-ball on the spot intended; thirdly, to gauge the force with which the cue-ball is to be struck; and fourthly, to impart the correct kind of contact between the cue and the cue-ball. This latter, as we shall see when dealing with the striking of the ball, is of far more importance than most people imagine.

In addressing the ball the point of the cue should be brought as close up to the ball as it can be without actually touching it, and the movements should be made with that freedom which a flexible wrist alone can ensure. It is highly advisable, too, that these preliminary movements should not be too much prolonged, three or four motions backwards and forwards being ample. Care must be taken that there is no stoppage of the cue between the last of these movements and the striking of the ball, for if this happens the real effect of the motion will be lost. By striking the ball with a swinging cue that peculiar kind of contact which is so necessary can only be properly

obtained. The strokes should be long during the address, so much so, in fact, that the cue-point should travel each time almost the entire distance between the ball and the bridge.

STRIKING THE BALL

WE now come to one of the most important points in the whole game of billiards, namely, the correct manner in which the cue-tip must be brought into contact with the cue-ball in the act of striking. Most players give this subject no attention whatever, scarcely knowing, in fact, that there is such a thing as correct contact. And yet the first thing which should occur to anyone watching a good professional player should be the totally different way in which he strikes his ball from that which the ordinary amateur adopts. In the case of the amateur there is a dull, leaden, lifeless contact, with no fire at all in it, whereas, with the professional there is a crisp and clicking sound which is alone sufficient to the thoughtful ear to prove its superiority. While the amateur simply *moves* his ball either faster or slower, the professional *strikes* his with a distinct knock, at the same time allowing his cue to remain on the ball for some short portion of time after contact, and to follow on in the path of the ball for some little distance. In no case must the movement of the cue be arrested upon contact, the proper action always taking the form, first of a knock and then of a modified kind of push. It is extremely difficult to explain this point in print, but if the intelligent student will

carefully watch the play at any first-class match he will soon see what I mean, and once having recognized what has to be done it must be his constant effort to himself be able to acquire the same kind of touch. In a great majority of shots the cue must remain on the bridge for some moments after the stroke has been made, and where the first object-ball is at some distance the tip of the cue should, at the finish of the stroke, be found to be lying on the table. The vital importance of a good touch cannot be over estimated, and the student should never rest satisfied until such has been secured.

TAKING AIM

AFTER the acquirement of a correct attitude, and after being able to hold the cue properly, make a good bridge, and possess a really steady and true cue-action, the student should spend some time in learning how to properly address and strike his ball as explained in the last two sections. When this can be done to some degree of perfection he can proceed to the use of two balls. Before, however, he attempts to strike one ball with another he must have a proper idea of the manner of taking aim. In taking aim it is necessary to be sure not only that the point of the cue is in the right place, but that the whole length of the cue lies in the right direction. The line of aim must be true, or the cue-ball must inevitably travel in a different direction from that which is desired. The eyes must be brought as closely down to the cue as they conveniently can, and must look straight along as much of the cue as possible. There is a great similarity between aiming with a cue and with a gun. The rifleman invariably brings his eye close to the barrel and looks along it from back sight to front; so also, as nearly as possible, must the billiard player do with his cue, for it would be as foolish for him to stand nearly upright, as many amateurs do, as it would be for the rifleman to keep his

head erect. In taking aim it is not necessary to know the exact spot upon which the object-ball must be struck, and then to aim at this, for if this were done allowances would have to be made which would be very uncertain; what is required is that the direction of the cue should be right, and only experience will teach this. Get well down to your ball, and look along as much of your cue as you can—I cannot repeat this too often.

After some practice in aiming you can now proceed to put your previous knowledge into effect by endeavouring to make shots which count. The most important of these, and the ones to be attacked first are what are termed Losing Hazards.

LOSING HAZARDS AND THE HALF-BALL SHOT

LOSING hazards, played with a plain half-ball contact, are far the most frequently occurring of all shots, and to these, therefore, the greatest attention must be paid.

A player who can make a true half-ball losing hazard, and who can reckon upon them with almost absolute certainty, has already mastered more than half the game, and will be difficult to beat. A correct knowledge of the angles of the table, a mastery of screw, side, drag, etc., the necessary facility as a winning hazard player, are all without doubt very essential, but at the same time it may be safely asserted that losing hazards are of more importance than everything else combined, and the student will, therefore, see how urgent it is that he should spend much time in practising these and in the acquirement of a degree of proficiency in them. At first, half-ball losers into the middle pockets should be learnt, with the object-ball in all manner of positions; when these can be made four times out of every five, then long losers into the top pockets should be attempted. These, of course, are more difficult, and it will be some time before the student can depend upon getting them with fair certainty, but so important are they that they must be

worked at day after day until a good measure of success has been attained.

The reason why losing hazards are of such importance and advantage is that it is fairly easy to leave good position after them, and that on making them the player has the privilege for the next shot of placing his ball anywhere within the radius of the **D**, which privilege is undoubtedly a great one. It has been truly said that losing hazards are the backbone of the game, and there can be no doubt of this in connexion with amateur play.

From the commencement, in practising losers, the position of the object-ball should always be taken into consideration. In the great majority of cases, whether the hazard be into a top or middle pocket, a loser into a middle pocket should always be endeavoured to be left.

It may be taken as a general rule that whenever a losing hazard is on and it can be relied upon to be made, it should be gone for. Players over and over again make the mistake of playing for a cannon when an easy in-off is also on; for in nineteen cases out of twenty far better positions will be left after the in-off.

WINNING HAZARDS

NEXT in importance to losing hazards come winning hazards, and these must be indefatigably practised for several weeks, from all positions and at all angles, from the fine cut to the straight pot.

There is a pretty theory much in vogue amongst billiard players—and to some extent even amongst teachers of the game—that in order to pocket a ball it must be hit on a point of its surface which is in a direct line between the centre of the ball and the centre of the pocket. There is also another pretty theory, that in potting a ball you should endeavour to strike it on the exact spot upon which you would hit it if you were to push it into the pocket with your cue. A third equally beautiful theory is, that in making a winning hazard your cue must take precisely the same angle with the centre of the cue-ball, as the centre of the object-ball possesses with the centre of the pocket. Now all this is undeniably correct and very interesting, but, speaking from the point of practical utility, there is extremely little value in such theorising. In trying to pot a ball you never stop to think of such things. You know that if the pocket and the two balls are in a straight line the direction of your cue must be straight. You know that if the

line between the balls and the pocket is not quite straight your cue also must be not quite straight, and you know that if the balls and the pocket are a long way from straight then the direction of the cue must likewise be a correspondingly long way from straight. Only experience will help you in judging the correct direction of your cue, and nothing but practice will give you that experience. This is all the theory you need in connexion with potting, and more than this will be next to useless, and can be well dispensed with.

With regard to pocketing the white, much false sentiment exists. I would strongly advise players to have no compunction on this point, but to calmly pot the white just whenever they consider it the game to do so. If a few amateurs would only have the courage to do this the extremely senseless notion that exists with regard to its being an ungentlemanly proceeding, etc., would soon go the way of all other stupid fallacies, and the best interests of the game would be observed.

In playing winning hazards it is generally advisable to use slow, or, at any rate, only medium, strength. It is true that when a ball travels fast it is more likely to run straight, but it is much more difficult to preserve true cue-action when hitting a ball hard than soft. Do not be afraid, as so many are, that if you play softly and fail to score you are likely to leave it on for your opponent. Such argument is childish. You are very nearly as likely to leave it favourably placed if you play hard, and it is not nearly so probable that you will get your shot. With some players there is a great fascination in sending a

ball in with a bang; they think it sounds well. Whether this be so or not one thing is sure—it is not sound play. How is it possible in playing so hard to have the very faintest notion of the position of your own ball after the stroke? In playing winning hazards beware of the fatal shoulder of the pocket, namely, the nearest shoulder, and always aim to send the ball in off the further angle if it cannot well be sent in straight.

CANNONS

BUT little need be said with regard to direct cannons, as a good losing-hazard player will have no difficulty in making them. At the same time, they should be practised to some small extent, especially when the balls are placed in awkward positions. Cushion cannons certainly require attention and practice, but with regard to the all-round cannons, though sometimes very useful at a critical state of the game, these should, as a general rule be shunned, as I shall explain more fully when dealing with fancy shots. Run-through cannons are also often extremely useful on account of their frequent occurrence, and some attention should undoubtedly be bestowed on them. If the object balls are at any distance from the cue-ball they should not be played with "top," but rather with "drag," special care being taken to hold the cue loosely and allow it to follow on well after contact. The slightest gripping of the cue, either before or at the moment of contact, or any arresting of the cue's course after the ball has been struck, will entirely prevent the running on effect required. Of course, if the cue-ball is anything less than a foot or so from the first object-ball, "top" must certainly be used. No side should be used in making direct ball-to-ball run-through cannons.

Cannons, as is well known, are far the easiest shots on the table, the reason being that the target presented is much larger than in the case of hazards. Especially is this so when the second object-ball is near a cushion, for then it is what is known as "a large ball." But although cannons are the easiest shots to score, they equalise matters by being the most difficult to leave position from.

One of the most useful shots on the table is what is called the "drop cannon." This occurs when the player is in hand, the second object-ball being near the top end of the table, and the first object-ball about half way between and not far from a middle pocket. With the balls in this position the game for the ordinary player is undoubtedly a loser into the middle pocket, when this is on, but should the first object-ball be too far up the table for this, then the drop cannon should certainly be played. These drop cannons must be played at a rather slow pace and with drag, for the aim is to leave all three of the balls close together at the top of the table. This position is invaluable to the good professional, as he has then an opening for his top-of-the-table game, from which such prolific scoring is made, and even for the amateur, who is rarely able to aspire to this top-of-the-table game, this position is one of the best that can be obtained. The drop cannon is so called because the cue-ball just simply drops on to the second object-ball.

Run-through cannons are most frequently missed by going outside the second object-ball, and but rarely by going inside of it. It is well, therefore, in attempting them to remember this fact, and to endeavour to make

the cannon on to the second object-ball on its *inner* edge; that is to say, the edge nearest the first object-ball.

Kiss-cannons are sometimes useful, and should by no means be neglected. For instance, with the red on the spot and the white in a straight line behind it, it is very easy to make a kiss-cannon by spotting your ball on the centre baulk spot, and by endeavouring to play full on to the red. If an absolutely full contact were made the cannon would be missed, but in aiming for a full shot it is twenty to one that the ball will be struck a little less than full, and in this case the kiss-cannon is almost bound to come off.

In making a cannon where a cushion has to be struck between the two balls it is a good plan to imagine a ball to be placed on the cushion at the spot it would be necessary to strike in order to make the cannon, and then to spot your ball in a position where this imaginary cannon would be made.

SIDE

SOME of the prettiest shots are made as the result of imparting plenty of side to the ball. Side is specially useful when playing losing hazards, for, as is well known, its practical effect is to render the pocket considerably larger than it really is.

Running side is that which causes the ball to take a wider angle than it would without side, after having struck a ball or a cushion; check side causes it to take a narrower angle. Running side also causes the ball to run faster after touching a cushion, check side to check the pace or run slower. Pocket side is that side of the ball which is nearest the pocket.

A fact not generally known is that side acts very considerably in conjunction with the nap of the cloth. For instance, when playing up the table with the nap, right-hand side will cause the cue-ball to take a course considerably to the right of that which it would take were no side used, and left-hand side will cause it to diverge considerably to the left. But in playing against the nap exactly the reverse effect is obtained. This can be clearly demonstrated by taking a ball in the hand, and by spinning it strongly with the fingers, and at the same time sending it first up and then down the table. It will

be found, in doing this, that exactly the same sided twist will cause the ball to diverge in precisely opposite directions when running with and against the nap. Of course, this divergence is only appreciable when the ball is running slowly. In fast shots side has but little, if any, effect, until a cushion or ball be struck, and it is always advisable, therefore, to play such without side.

The point is often discussed whether side can be transmitted from the cue-ball to the object-ball.

Another question frequently discussed is whether side has any effect when the ball is played direct on to the object-ball, and when a cushion is not touched. These discussions may undoubtedly possess interest from a theoretical point of view, but their practical value is absolutely nil, for if transmitted side or side off a ball are realities the effect is so infinitesimal as to be totally unworthy of consideration in actual play.

In order to impart the maximum of side or spin to a ball it must be struck as far from its centre as possible, but care must be taken never to strike it so near the edge as to render a mis-cue probable. A still more important consideration in imparting side is to see that the ball is struck properly, according to the directions already given. It is only by giving the ball a distinct knock or flip, and by allowing the cue to follow on that extreme side can be secured. The student must devote considerable time to practising shots which require side, particularly long losing hazards where the angle is less than the natural half-ball angle, and where check side is necessary in order to find the pocket. Both shots which need excessive side

and those requiring only a moderate amount should be practised. Most amateurs appear to labour under the delusion that there is only one degree of side, namely, the superlative; as a matter of fact, side can be modified very materially. Side can be advantageously combined with either screw, top, or drag, as I shall show when dealing with these various sections.

When the angle, either for a cannon or loser, is a little wider than the natural angle, it is always far better to play it at medium strength and with running side than to either attempt to get the shot by slightly forcing or screwing it.

SCREW

SCREW is obtained by striking the ball below its horizontal centre, and by striking the ball in quite a different manner to that required for ordinary shots. Most players imagine that when screwing the cue must be suddenly arrested or drawn back with a jerk immediately it has struck the cue-ball. This idea is entirely wrong, for in screws precisely the same following on of the cue is required as is used with all other shots, though here, of course, owing to the recoiling of the ball, the following on action cannot be as prolonged as in other shots. The great difference between making screws and ordinary shots is that whereas for the latter the cue must be held very loosely during the whole of the shot, with screws the cue is held very loosely while addressing the ball, but must be gripped or pinched at the very moment of its contact with the ball. This act of gripping must in no way impede the forward movement of the cue, and great care must be taken that it occurs only at the precise moment of contact. There is, no doubt, a great deal of knack in screwing, but, by practising this pinching motion and by always seeing that the cue tip goes through the ball, this knack will soon be secured. Of course, in a direct screw-back shot the cue must be drawn quickly back after

contact, or the recoiling ball will be liable to meet the cue, but for all screws other than full the cue must go forward as much as possible.

In screw shots the bridge hand should be brought closer to the ball than in ordinary shots.

Screwing, the same as side, is capable of many varying degrees, as is demonstrated by the oft-recurring fact that amateurs, as a rule, have the habit of over-screwing.

These various degrees in screwing can be obtained in three ways, first, by striking the cue-ball with more or less force, secondly, by gripping the cue harder or not so hard, and thirdly, by striking the cue-ball fuller or finer. This last way is the only correct one, and should always be adopted. A perfectly full contact will cause the cue-ball to recoil in a straight line; a half-ball contact will cause it to come off the object-ball at a right angle; and so on with all the different degrees of fullness with which the object-ball is struck. In all cases an equal amount of gripping or pinching should be applied.

The slow screw is a shot which invariably marks the good player. It is extremely useful and should be practised diligently, especially screwing into corner pockets off a ball at a very wide angle. In these cases the screw should be accompanied by side, which should be running side if the ball is well away from the cushion, and check side if it is near a cushion.

A fine screw is sometimes advantageous where it is necessary for the ball to travel at a wider angle than it would take without the screw, and yet where it is advisable that the object-ball should not be moved far away.

I would strongly advise players never to attempt those excessive screws at long range which some performers delight in exhibiting. The effect is certainly brilliant when they come off, but nothing makes a man look more sheepish than to fail in attempting the outrageous.

In making screws with the cue-ball near a cushion or pocket, the butt end of the cue must necessarily be raised. A more effective screw can be obtained in this position by giving the cue a downward curving action instead of simply moving it backward and forward in a straight line while addressing the ball and when striking. The effect of screw is to cause reverse rotation, and to secure this the ball must, of course, be hit below its centre. It must be borne in mind, however, that it is the *strikable* centre of the ball that is concerned and not its actual centre. If the cue be held nearly upright this strikable centre will be nearly on top of the ball, and it will vary according to the degree at which the cue is inclined from the horizontal.

The Massé shot, so effectual in the hands of the professional, is nothing but a species of screw, but this shot is so difficult to control that it is scarcely worth while for the amateur to devote the time to it that it demands.

JENNIES

THE reason why jennies are more difficult than ordinary losing hazards is, that owing to the ball being near a cushion the pocket is a very blind or small one, and from the same cause it is not so easy to judge the angle.

To overcome these difficulties it is always most essential that jennies should be played with the greatest amount of check side possible, for this extreme side acts both by making the pocket larger and by causing the ball to hug the cushion. In consequence of this latter tendency of the check side, it should always be seen that the angle is plenty wide enough, for the side will narrow it considerably. The pace for jennies should never be a fast one, as the side will have no effect unless the ball be running at slow or very moderate speed.

Short jennies into the middle pockets, or long ones into top pockets when the object-ball is below the middle pocket, should be played without drag, but for long jennies, when the ball is anywhere past the middle pocket, drag as well as side should be employed.

It frequently happens in playing long jennies, especially if the ball be very close to the cushion, that the shot is spoilt by a kiss. Care must be taken to avoid this

by seeing that accurate aim is made, so that the object-ball is not struck too full.

Jennies into middle pockets are of good service as they invariably leave position either for another short jenny or for an ordinary loser. Considerable practice is necessary before jennies can be relied upon with tolerable certainty, and very great attention must be given, when playing them, to the correct cue action. But although jennies occur frequently enough to justify the student in spending some time in their acquirement, it will be a mistake to give them this attention at the expense of still more useful shots, such as losing and winning hazards.

RUN-THROUGH SHOTS

AS already explained, in playing run-through shots, the cue-ball must be struck well above its centre where the first object-ball is not more than a foot or so away, but centrally or with bottom—though by no means with screw—when the first object-ball is at any considerable distance. Run-through losing hazards and cannons are difficult because it is no easy matter to judge just how full to hit the object-ball, but with practice this difficulty gradually disappears. One thing must be particularly noticed with regard to these shots, namely, that when running through a ball into a pocket the maximum of side must be imparted, no matter whether the cue-ball be struck high or low. Run-throughs are easier with the nap than against it or across the table, from the fact that with the nap pocket-side is also the correct side for making the ball cling to the side cushion. In striking your ball high, where the object-ball is very close, a curved upward motion must be given to the point of the cue, and, with all run-through shots, special care must be taken to obtain the extreme following on movement of the cue. The curved upward motion required for shots where the object ball is close, necessitates the removal of the cue from the bridge hand immediately

after contact, and this is one of the very few shots which do so require the removal of the cue from the bridge.

Considerable practice should be devoted to run-through shots, especially to run-through losers—for, after winning and half-ball losing hazards, they are more frequent than any other strokes. In practising them the points which must be strictly observed are, (1) that the line of aim is correct, (2) that for losers the greatest possible amount of side must be imparted, (3) that contact with the cue-ball be good by striking it with a distinct "flip," and (4) that the cue be held extremely loosely and allowed to follow on as much as possible.

In playing a hazard or cannon from the **D** it is often advisable, instead of placing your ball for the half-ball shot, to place it for a run-through, for by thus varying the shot the balls may frequently be left together instead of wide apart.

For a cannon or losing hazard, where the angle is a very narrow one, and the object-ball is at a distance, it is always more reliable to play it as a partial run-through than as a fine shot.

A run-through loser into a middle pocket across the table, and where the pocket is a wide one, should be played without side but with plenty of top.

FORCING SHOTS

THESE occur when the angle between the cue-ball and pocket or object-ball is a very wide one. Whenever possible a forcing shot should be played in preference to a screw, but where the angle is only slightly wider than the natural angle it is better to play an ordinary half-ball shot with running side rather than either a screw or forcing shot. With forcing shots it is always desirable to put top on your ball, though seldom or never desirable to use side, as side has but very little effect on a fast travelling ball unless, of course, a cushion intervenes.

A good practice shot for forcers is to place the red ball on the billiard spot, and endeavour to force your own ball off it into a top pocket from varying positions away from a centre pocket; these should be practised on both sides of the table, and it will be noticed that from the right-hand side the use of the rest will be necessary, which should also be practised.

DRAG

DRAG is secured by striking the ball low, while holding the cue loosely and allowing it to follow on. The effect of drag, like that of screw, is to impart reverse or backward rotation. This causes the ball to slide along the cloth for some distance instead of roll, and in this way the ball will travel much straighter than it would with a slow shot. Drag also enables the player to strike his ball much harder than he could otherwise do, and yet hit the object-ball with a moderate enough pace to keep it at the top of the table, or at any rate out of baulk. Drag and side can often be combined with the most excellent results, as in the case of long jennies, where the object-ball is at a distance. This combination of drag and side is also valuable in making cannons or losing hazards from the **D** with the other ball or balls near the top of the table.

Many good players make such a wide use of drag as to appear to adopt it in nearly every shot, and, undoubtedly, its correct employment is a very valuable factor towards success.

TOP

I HAVE already mentioned the value of top, or hitting the cue-ball well above its centre, when playing forcing shots or run-throughs, and I have already explained that peculiar upward curving motion of the cue tip which is necessary in playing these shots with top. Even when the shot is not a forcing one, but is required to be made with considerable strength in order to cause the object-ball to travel a distance for the sake of position, top should be applied. An excellent example of this occurs in the case of a long loser into a top pocket when the object ball is on or near the middle spot. Most amateurs play these as a slow or medium paced stroke, thus leaving the object-ball high up the table and generally safe under a side cushion, but a professional always plays them at a high speed and with top, so as to leave the object-ball for an in-off into a middle pocket. There is no shot which distinguishes the taught from the untaught player more than this, and if you wish to exhibit good form you will always play it as I have directed.

THE STUN

THE stun shot consists in striking the object-ball in such a way that it travels a considerable distance—generally all round the table, and comes to rest again not far from its original position. At the same time the cue-ball and second object-ball are caused to travel very little indeed from the place they occupy. It is a species of what are called gathering shots, and is employed for the purpose of bringing all three balls into close proximity.

For making a stun shot the object-ball must be hit not far from full, and the cue, instead of being held loosely, must be firmly gripped. This gripping, however, is quite different from that employed in making a screw, for whereas in the latter case it takes place only during the moment of contact, for the stun it is maintained during the whole of the shot, and also while addressing the ball. The cue must be pressed firmly on the bridge and considerable force must be used, the cue-ball being struck only slightly below its centre.

Of a somewhat similar nature to the stun is the "stab," but here the object-ball is struck quite full, and the cue-ball made to stop dead almost on the very spot formerly occupied by the object-ball. This shot is used for obtain-

ing a winning hazard, and with a view to leaving good position.

The stun shot, as is also the case with the stab, can only be effected satisfactorily when the cue-ball and object-ball are fairly close together.

POSITION

PLAYING so as to leave good after-position is absolutely the greatest feature in all really superior billiards. However perfect one may be in the making of shots, unless there be also the ability to leave something fairly easy for next time, a big break will be of but very rare occurrence, and even when it does transpire will be merely through good luck. The game is won, not by the making of difficult shots, but by the absolute certainty with which easy shots can be made and by the ability to leave other easy shots on afterwards. A fine stroke-player will doubtless often receive the greater amount of applause, but that is not winning the game, and the man who wants to do this latter must possess the far more solid asset of being a position player. Playing for position is doubtless difficult of acquirement, but is only so from the fact that it demands rather more determination on the part of the student than does the mere making of single shots. If, however, the student will get into the way, right from the start, of trying to imagine where the object-ball or balls, as well as his own ball, will come to rest after the stroke, and will persistently do this, before long he will find that he is beginning to do this quite mechanically and as a matter of course. Make up

your mind resolutely that you will never strike a ball without having previously entertained the thought of what the after-position will be, and, however wide of the mark you are at first, slowly but surely your judgement and strength will improve. It will be monotonous for you to do this at first, and you will often be tempted to grow slovenly, but if you only persevere for a time you will before long see what an added interest this gives to the game, and how incalculably it improves your play.

Position play does not mean the leaving of the balls in any mathematically exact place—it simply means “there or thereabouts,” and is often a matter of where not to leave the balls rather than precisely where to leave them. In making losing hazards, for instance, as long as care is taken not to leave the ball too far from the middle of the table, and not in baulk, an easy shot for next time is almost sure to be left.

There are certain shots the after-position of which is practically a fixed quantity. For instance, after a loser into a middle or top pocket played from the **D**, position for another middle pocket loser should always be tried for. Again, when potting the red, with the object-ball on the spot, and the cue-ball a trifle nearer the top cushion, the position aimed at is for a loser off the red into a top pocket, drag being used to prevent the cue-ball from travelling too far. When, too, the red is on the spot and the cue-ball on a line drawn from its centre to the centre of a top pocket it is easy to play a loser into the opposite top pocket with just sufficient strength to leave a loser into a middle pocket.

It is, of course, much easier to leave position after a hazard than after a cannon, for, in the first place, only the after placing of one ball has to be determined, whereas with a cannon the position of all three balls has to be considered; and position from a loser is always easier to secure than from a winner, because after a loser you have the advantage of spotting your ball anywhere in the **D**, and this is a privilege the value of which is often underestimated.

To secure a good position after a cannon, pay particular attention to the red ball, and, if possible, always leave it over or near a top pocket.

It is a good plan, both when practising and when playing games, to always get into the habit, before making a shot, of mentally uttering the words, "I must try to get so-and-so, and to leave so-and-so." If you have strength of mind enough to be determined that this formula shall pass through your thoughts before every shot you attempt you will soon be in the happy condition of a position player.

TOP-OF-THE-TABLE GAME

THIS is undoubtedly the most prolific method of scoring allowable at the present day, but to enable one to master it or even to attain a proficiency in it which would make it worth while trying for, requires such a tremendous amount of practice that none but the professional player can be prepared to devote the necessary time to it. With the professional, who, of course, devotes his whole time and attention to the game, top-of-the-table play is certainly an absolute necessity, for without it he could never hope to compete with others who hold a mastery of this game. But for the ordinary amateur the top-of-the-table game is almost invariably a thing to be admired, but scarcely to be desired, for its attainment must necessarily involve the almost total exclusion of all his other affairs of life. In the olden days, before the top-of-the-table game or its progenitor, the spot-stroke, was introduced, there were no mammoth breaks such as are now of almost daily occurrence, and even in the present day I question whether our finest players could oftener than now and then succeed in making breaks of very much over a hundred, purely at the ordinary all-round game to which the amateur, by force of circumstances, must necessarily be restricted.

Top-of-the-table play consists of alternately—or nearly alternately—cannoning and potting the red—the real proportion being about two cannons to one hazard. This game demands an extreme delicacy of touch, and a most precise judgement as to position, and were the amateur to attempt to practise it he would most probably do so at the expense of his all-round play. Unless, therefore, the student has an enormous amount of spare time on his hands, and is prepared to devote several hours daily to the game, I would strongly urge him to leave the top-of-the-table game strenuously alone. At the same time it is advisable for him to know what this method of play is, and wherein lie its beauties, so that he may the better appreciate it when he sees its capabilities demonstrated by professionals at first-class matches. There is a capital little book on the subject by H. W. Stevenson, the well-known player, and as this also contains some other valuable hints on the game in general, I would recommend every enthusiastic amateur to secure a copy.

SAFETY

THE elder John Roberts, in his interesting work on billiards, mentions the circumstance of a gentleman who came to him one day for advice. This gentleman, it appears, had frequently played a certain opponent in friendly and private matches, and had almost invariably found himself at the end of the game in the not altogether enviable position of second best, even although he was convinced of the fact that he was the better, or at any rate, an equally good player. In a match which was to be played the following week—a match in which a very considerable interest was at stake—the visitor had a most particular desire to be the victor, and he came to Roberts, as he explained, with the object of knowing whether the great player could put him up to a few wrinkles with regard to his play which would enable him to win, and thus to retrieve somewhat of his lost dignity. Roberts replied that it was extremely doubtful whether he could do much, if anything, to aid him in so short a time; however, the best plan would be for them to have a game or two together, when possibly some advisable course might present itself. After playing a few games Roberts enquired whether the gentleman's antagonist were not really a much better player, and on being assured

to the contrary the champion replied that he knew of one way, and of one way only by which Mr. X could be fairly sure of winning the match. It was for him to play a much safer game than that which appeared to be his custom. "On every occasion," said Roberts, "on which you would not bet even money on making the particular shot, you should evade it, and play simply for safety. Come to me for an hour each day until the match, and I will coach you up in this special work, and if you follow my advice I will undertake to say that your chance of winning will be a big one." The result was exactly as Roberts had predicted, and a very handsome *douceur* rewarded the champion for his thoughtful advice.

I mention this incident to show that there is no doubt whatever that many amateurs frequently go out for shots which it is long odds against their achieving, and which it would pay far better to avoid. In this way they open the game for their opponent, leaving position from which large breaks can often be made. Far too little attention is paid by the average billiard player to the excellent old adage that "Discretion is the better part of valour." The satisfaction obtained when one of these out-of-the-common shots comes off is too tempting to be missed. These players are cowards from the very fact that they are afraid of being looked upon as cowards. They think that odium must necessarily be attached to them if they practise care and subtlety. They enslave themselves blindly and exclusively to the principle of "Nothing venture, nothing gain." Consequently they lose many a game which, with a little common-sense tact, they might win.

Now, I most certainly do not contend that any player should adopt safety tactics to the extent of either making the game monotonous and uninteresting, or of giving just cause for causing him to be considered timid and wanting in pluck. Now and then a player is encountered who will give a miss or otherwise play for safety on every conceivable occasion, and nothing is more to be deprecated. But what I say is that a judicious use of safety at the proper time will often save a game, and that so far from such being evidence of cowardice, it will rather be proof of tactful resource and diplomatic acuteness.

In order to play for safety it is not always necessary to give a miss. A ball can often be struck so that absolutely nothing is left on. This, however, is not always so simple as it might appear, especially if the opponent be a fairly good stroke player; consequently it should be practised to some extent. As a general rule the time for safety play is when the player is well ahead and has the game in his hands, and the time when he should play a bolder game and go out for long chances is when he is almost hopelessly behind.

In opening a game, the usual safety miss should always be given, and unless the ball be left near the corner the reply to this should be a second miss under the cushion on the opposite side of the table to that on which the opponent's ball has come to rest. Where the ball has come too far over and is near the corner of the table it is frequently advisable to go out for the all-round cannon, instead of giving the second miss, especially if the opponent be but an indifferent player. When a ball is near a

cushion, and especially when it is near a corner, it is what is termed a "large ball," and the cannon is thus much more likely to result than if it were in the middle of the table.

In playing for safety you should endeavour to leave the balls as far apart as possible, and under opposite cushions if it can be done. Do not move the red ball if it is safe, and leave the white under a cushion or in some other position where it is difficult to play from.

Most players, in seeking safety, invariably leave their own ball near a cushion. This is often a mistake, for equal safety can frequently be secured while leaving your ball in a better position from which to play your next shot. Besides, it often happens that a cannon can be made when your ball is near a cushion.

PLAYING THE GAME

BY all means it is always to be recommended that the player should, as it is termed, "play the game." It is invariably the game, for instance, to play a losing hazard when one is on with tolerable certainty, even although there is also on a still easier cannon. As already explained, the privilege of playing from the **D** is a very considerable one, and should never be under-valued. At the same time players vary very much both as to style and degree of ability, and what may be the game for one may not necessarily be the game for another. Be content, therefore, if you are a player of but small experience, to play *your* game rather than *the* game, and rest assured that it will pay you better to attempt a shot of which you are tolerably certain rather than a more doubtful one, even although the position left by the latter is likely to be much better than that left by the former. Always look forward, though, to the time when with more experience *your* game and *the* game will be synonymous.

THE BILLIARD TEMPERAMENT

WHAT is known as the billiard temperament consists of a steady, easy, reliable manner, with total absence of nervousness and perfect equanimity, even under the most trying circumstances. To be able to play at one's best there must be no fear whatever of results, you must keep unmercifully cool, your demeanour must be one of absolute indifference as to what occurs, and not the very faintest trace of irritability of any kind must be present. Flukes, an adverse running of the balls, all the luck being with your antagonist, the inconsiderate behaviour of those who are looking on, and all the multitude of other causes which are likely to arise to upset the equanimity of the inexperienced player, must be endured with the most stoic calmness, and with a suave serenity and degree of nonchalance that is almost elfish.

This temperament is more easily attained by some than by others, but even those of the most nervous and fidgety disposition can acquire it by proper training and practice. Like everything else, the more one gives way to irritability the more it grows upon him, and by constant endeavour it gradually disappears—slowly at first, but afterwards more rapidly—until at last all trace of it has

gone, and then, indeed, will he know the benefit of his efforts.

You will often meet in the billiard room an amateur who is excitable and fidgety in the extreme. Everything he does causes him discontent. If he misses the shot his play is "simply rotten." If his opponent scores by accident it is "just like his luck," and no one can play against such beastly good fortune. The slightest noise upsets his equilibrium. The light is bad. The balls are untrue. Whoever tipped his cue ought to tip just one more like it and then go and hang himself. He never played on such a confoundedly slow table—he should think it hadn't been ironed for a month. And as for the audience, some of them could certainly never have been inside a billiard room before. Well, small wonder is it that when a player so far forgets himself as to get into this frame of mind, or anything approaching it, everything seems to go against him. By his very attitude of thought he is absolutely courting disaster, and under such circumstances who can be surprised that disaster comes?

You must take the rough with the smooth. It is your opponents' turn to have the luck to-day—it will be your turn to-morrow. One cannot always expect either to be in the best of form or to have the best of the luck. No possible good can result from grumbling, or fretting, or worrying, but such must inevitably produce harm. After all, what does it matter if the game is not won? Try to cultivate such thoughts as these, or rather not to think about such trifles at all. They are positively beneath notice, and the

sooner you get into the habit of utterly ignoring them the better, for while there is the slightest inclination on your part to, vulgarly speaking, "get into a stew," there is but small hope for you as a billiard player. It is this well recognised fact that makes billiards such splendid training for young men, as I once heard emphasised by the late Ian Maclaren in a sermon at his church in Liverpool. Bear in mind that each time you give way to irritability or discontent you are practising this grave error, and before long, if you do not check yourself, you will find that you have grown into a habit which must inevitably be to your lasting detriment, and have got confirmed in a temperament which is not only fatal to good play, but which will also cause you deterioration in every way. Take a thousand cares, therefore, to avoid this wrong mental attitude, and whenever you find yourself drifting into a complaining mood leave off play at once. Always strive to be courteous and cheerful; act with consideration towards your opponent. In every possible way prove by your words and actions that you know properly how to both win and lose.

AVERAGES

THE occasional ascertainment of your average is a proceeding which should not be neglected, for it is not merely interesting but is also not without value. By knowing what is the average number of points you score each time you go to the table you become acquainted with the true state of your game, and only in this way can you do so with any degree of reliability. The fact that you can now beat a player who formerly could invariably beat you is proof of nothing definite, for it may be evidence only of his deterioration rather than of your own improvement; and even where you have ample reason to believe that your playing has advanced, nothing less than the taking of your average can show you to what extent this advancement exists. Every one, therefore, who is studying the game and who wishes to know how much he has improved in a given time, should not fail to now and then go to the trouble of ascertaining his average. This is done by carefully keeping count of the number of times you go to the table during each game and by making a note of this number at the end of the game, and of the number of points you have scored. This must be done for a considerable number of games—never less than twenty—and you then simply add together the

total of the number of points scored, and the number of innings you have had, and divide the former by the latter, extending the product, of course, into fractions of a point. Of course, in doing this you must reckon each miss you give as an innings, and every time you go to the table to play must be counted, whether you score or not.

A first-class professional will average between 30 and 50, and a very good amateur 10. If your average is 5 you will be a player much above the ordinary, while even 3.50 or 4 is not at all bad. Forms for keeping averages are published by Messrs Burroughes & Watts, Ltd, 19 Soho Square, W., and should be used.

I might here mention that the Council of the Billiards Control Club have now adopted a plan for registering players according to their average, and I should certainly imagine that such a scheme would be a source of creating further interest in the game.

MISCELLANEOUS HINTS

PLAYERS often try to obtain double shots when it would be of far more advantage for them to get a single one. If, for instance, the red ball is right over a top pocket the temptation to make the six shot is too seductive for many players, whereas a simple winner, leaving position for a cross in-off into the opposite top pocket would not only eventuate in the same number of points scored, but would also leave far better opportunity for continuing the break.

Many amateurs, too, when there is a probability of scoring in two ways with the same stroke will often endeavour to get both, thinking that if they miss one they may get the other. Nothing can be more erroneous. If you concentrate your whole attention on getting one of the shots, the chances are that you will get it, but by dividing your attention you will most likely miss both. By playing for this class of double shot you complicate your game unnecessarily, for how is it possible for you to secure both and yet leave position?

I have already mentioned the avoidance of all-round cannons and other fancy shots, but would again caution the student against attempting them in the ordinary way. Now and then, when, for instance, your chance of

winning the game is almost hopeless, it will be advisable for you to go out for these out-of-the-way shots, but as a general rule it will pay you far better to seek safety than to attempt them. Of course, in giving this advice I do not wish you to develop into that most uninteresting class of players who are totally without pluck, and whose sole aim is to make it uncomfortable for their opponents. What I mean is, that if you want to win you must adopt a defensive course to a far greater extent than is ordinarily done, and, in the usual way, you should never attempt a shot when the odds are more than two to one that you will not get it.

In placing your ball in the **D** for the natural angle, do so while standing erect. Then get down to your ball, and if you think the angle is not quite right alter it; should you, however, have to move the ball more than an inch, you should always rise to the erect attitude again, and take up a fresh stand before your ball, for nothing tends to cause an inaccurate aim or a bad cue delivery more than standing in a wrong position before the cue-ball.

The placing of the feet in taking up your attitude, is a far more important detail than most players imagine, a good firm stand, with the feet placed as I have already described, being a desideratum.

When your ball is touching a cushion or near one, always shorten your cue by holding it several inches further from the butt end than usual. When practising, get yourself accustomed to playing from all kinds of cramped and awkward positions.

Should the two object-balls be in baulk, endeavour to get the red out in preference to the white.

I cannot too strongly recommend the player to take pains with even the easiest shots. Many a game is lost through carelessly playing simple shots, and however easy a stroke may be it is remarkable how often such shots are missed entirely through carelessness.

Much may be learnt by watching good players. This benefit, however, will only be gained by watching carefully and intelligently. You should note specially the attitude of the professional player, his manner of holding the cue, aiming, cue action, etc., and particularly the way in which he strikes his ball. By doing this you will learn much, and the vital importance of exactness even in the minutest details will be impressed upon you. Attend as many good matches as you can, for watching the play intelligently will be quite as good as a lesson.

A capital form of exercise for securing freedom of cue and quickness of aim is to play on a moving ball. Place the ball on the baulk line, send it forcibly up the table, and on its return send it back again. Keep this up for several minutes, and you will soon see the beneficial result. Many professionals resort to this moving-ball practice shortly before playing in a match, and all agree as to the benefit to be derived from it.

Another capital form of practice consists of a good long spell of forcing shots. Teachers of billiards often put their pupils on to practising forcing shots as soon as they are sufficiently advanced to use two balls, and there can

be no doubt that in this way a great freedom of cue will be acquired.

When using either the short or the long rest, place its handle on the table, or as nearly so as is possible, and let it lie in a line parallel with the direction of the cue. Nothing looks more awkward and amateurish than the method adopted by many novices or untaught players of playing with the rest at a decided angle.

In using the rest, too, you should always play with its lower end on the table. The rest in many instances consists of two pieces of tube in the form of a cross, and it can be either used with the low end or the high end of this cross on the table. Most amateurs make the mistake of using the higher end, whereas the low end is correct for almost every kind of shot, as the high end raises the cue too far from the table and prevents it being held horizontally.

Get into the habit of using plenty of chalk. It is possible to use too much, for if chalk gets on the ball it may cause it to "kick" or take a different angle, but at the same time many a game has been sacrificed through a mis-cue caused by not using enough chalk; so do not stint it. The best kind of material to use is Spink's green chalk.

Pay the utmost attention to the tip of your cue. Whenever this gets spread, mushroom fashion, beyond the circumference of the cue itself, carefully file it down until all projections disappear. Also glass-paper its top very lightly, and with the very finest glass-paper, now and then, for after being in use some time the tip is sure to

get either greasy or shiny, so that it will not take the chalk properly.

All players should be able to tip their own cues, for to leave this operation to the marker is often risky and generally not wholly satisfactory. To tip a cue correctly, the great thing is to get its end perfectly level. This is a most difficult matter if, as is generally done, the file is rubbed on the cue; but by rubbing the cue on the file in the following manner the process is a most easy one. Obtain a special cue-tipping file and place this on a window ledge or other projection so that it stands up on its edge with the fine side of the file towards you. Then take the cue in your two hands in a horizontal position and work its end against the file with a circular grinding motion. Do not press too hard, and be careful to see that the cue is held horizontally all the time, and that the point remains on exactly the same spot on the file during the whole operation. In this way an uneven top is an impossibility. When this is done score a few short lines on the part filed with the point of a sharp penknife. Then slightly file the inside of the tip and score a few lines on this also. These lines or cuts will allow the glue to penetrate into the cue and into the tip, and a good firm hold will be obtained. Nothing is better for the purpose of fixing the tip than the Imperial cue-tipping cement—fish glue or secotine are not to be recommended—and this should be well melted by placing the bottle in boiling water for a minute or so. Before fixing the tip, see that it fits the top of the cue all over, and that no signs of daylight can be seen round the edges. It is advisable to use

a tip somewhat larger than the top of the cue. The next day the tip should be hammered a little with a wooden mallet and the edges carefully trimmed off with a sharp knife, the cue being held upright for the purpose with its point standing downwards on a block of wood. Finish off with very fine glass-paper.

In choosing a cue always go to a good, reliable maker whose word can be taken that it has been in stock at least two years. Select a perfectly straight one, testing it both by looking along its length and by rolling it on a billiard table. See that the grain runs straight along it, and that it has no knots. Players vary in their opinion as to the correct weight of a cue and as to the size of its point, but it is a significant fact that almost all the professional players now use a cue weighing either 15 or $15\frac{1}{2}$ ounces, and there can be no doubt that a large or medium sized tip is far preferable to a small one. I think $1\frac{7}{8}$ or even $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch an admirable size, and certainly it should not be less than $1\frac{5}{8}$. A small tip often causes a miss-cue; it does not allow of sufficient rigidity of the cue, and the tip will not remain on for any length of time. With a large tip more of the surface of the ball is struck, and a better grip of the ball is thus secured. Should you have a good cue the point of which is too small, or which has become worn too thin by constant glass-papering, you can easily have it spliced with a new end at very small cost, and the cue will be quite as good as ever. In fact, many professionals prefer a spliced cue to a new one, as they say it imparts greater delicacy of touch. A cue should be quite inflexible.

When one has been playing constantly for a few months it frequently happens that he gets stale and goes completely off form. Under such circumstances the remedy is simple—take an entire rest for a week, during which you do not so much as see a billiard table.

When playing on a cue-ball which is close up to the cushion, and in any case, in fact, where the bridge hand has to rest on the cushion rail, the best kind of bridge is through the fingers and not over the hand, the cue being allowed to run on the cushion rail itself.

What is termed a "short leg and a long leg" occurs when the cue-ball is close to the first object-ball, while the distance between the latter and the second object-ball, or pocket, is considerable. It is very difficult to correctly judge the angle for such shots, and they require to be practised.

A "set" occurs when the two object-balls are touching and are placed so that a straight line passing through their centres would, if extended, reach the centre of a pocket. In this case it is very easy to pocket the second object-ball merely by striking the first object-ball anywhere on its outside half. For instance, if the red ball is on the centre spot and the white is touching it and in a direct line with a centre pocket the red can be easily potted from any position if the object-white is struck anywhere on the half opposite to that which touches the red.

Similarly, a "plant" occurs when the two object-balls are touching and are at direct right angles with a pocket. Thus, with the red on the middle spot and the object-

white touching it in a perfectly straight line up the centre of the table, it is very easy to pocket the red into either centre pocket by striking it on any part of its half which is away from the pocket.

Players who frequently attempt cushion cannons are generally shy in going out for a cushion losing-hazard. Of course the former are easier, but often the latter are far from difficult. It will be of considerable help in playing these if you simply imagine that a ball is right over the pocket and then play for the imaginary cannon.

A good habit for you to get into when taking up your attitude for a stroke is to imitate Stevenson by laying the whole of your fore-arm on the table whenever it is possible.

Every player should possess a cue file. By gently tapping the cue tip with this occasionally the pores of the leather will be freed from chalk and prevented from getting clogged.

METHOD OF PRACTICE

I NOW come to the last and most important portion of my task, namely, that relating to the correct method of study and practice. Important as it is, it is not a little strange that it is a subject upon which no other work on billiards with which I am acquainted—and I think I know them all—so much as touches. Only by a thoroughly systematic course, and by exerting a real endeavour to improve, can the student attain a knowledge of the game in the shortest possible time. A street musician may play his fiddle for ten hours a day for thirty years and will play no better at the end than at the beginning, simply because he does not *try* to improve. Think well over this fact, and let it prove to you how vitally necessary it is for you, if you wish to become efficient, always to do your utmost to learn something and to play better each time you go to the table. Of course, I know that there are many really good players who have never had a lesson, who have never read a book on billiards, and who have never turned any serious thought to the game at all. By commencing when young, by seeing much good play and imitating it, and by playing almost daily for many years, they have gradually improved until they have eventually reached their

present good form; but think how long it has taken them and how much better it would have been for them if they had devoted a few months to a really systematic course of study.

Personal lessons from a professional teacher are undoubtedly of great assistance, for in this way faults are not allowed to grow, and a correct style is acquired right from the commencement. Players who are untaught or who have been badly taught almost always carry with them inaccuracies which at once mark them. I would, therefore, strongly advise every one to take at least a few lessons from a well qualified teacher. At the same time, I must say that I do not look upon personal tuition as absolutely essential, for I am convinced that by adhering firmly to the course of instruction which I give in this book, and by intelligently watching good players, any thoughtful student who has sufficient strength of mind to practise the game diligently can, before long, attain to a degree of skill far above the ordinary.

When the student has quite made up his mind to devote his serious attention to the game, and to spend at least two hours daily at it for several months, I would advise him to strictly adhere to the following method of procedure.

For a time you should entirely discontinue the playing of games in the ordinary way, and devote your attention wholly to practising according to the method I shall give. Most likely you already have some knowledge of the game, but even if your experience is considerable, I would advise that you should endeavour to forget what

you now know and commence at the beginning again.

Nothing, you must remember, is too trivial or unimportant, however elementary it may seem, and even the smallest details you must pay strict attention to. Only in this way can you get a good solid foundation.

For the first fortnight you should entirely dispense with the use of the balls. Even the billiard table itself is not necessary, unless you are fortunate enough to possess one of your own. Any ordinary table, raised to the correct height, about 2 ft. 8 in., will do, so long as it is firm. During the first two weeks you should thoroughly study the sections of this book dealing with Attitude (page 1), Holding the Cue (page 3), The Bridge (page 4) and Cue Action (page 6).

During the next fortnight the sections on Addressing the Ball (page 8), Striking the Ball (page 10), and Taking Aim (page 12) must be well practised until they are completely mastered, great care being taken that everything previously learnt during the first fortnight is strictly observed. For this and all other future practice the use of a billiard table will, of course, be necessary, but up to the present the practice will only have been with one ball.

We now arrive at the time when two-ball practice can be commenced, and when the Half-ball Stroke as applied to Losing Hazards (page 14) must be acquired. As explained, the losing hazard is far the most important shot in the whole game, so far as the amateur's play is concerned, and much time will have to be devoted to it. Too much stress cannot be placed upon the fact that no

time or attention can be better spent than on a complete mastery of this shot. A player who can be practically certain of getting the half-ball loser is a man who is not easily beaten, and already half his work has been done. Two weeks should be devoted to this shot alone, the first week to losers into middle pockets the second week into top pockets. A further two weeks will be none too much to spend at both the middle and top pockets combined. In all cases, of course, strict observance must be made of the instructions relating to attitude, striking the ball, etc., and it is also imperative that with every stroke you make you should have some eye to position, always endeavouring to leave the object-ball in the middle of the table and to play with sufficient strength to bring it over a middle pocket. During this practice the cue-ball must always be placed in the **D** for the plain half-ball shot, no side or forcing being as yet attempted. Of course the placing of the balls must be varied, and often so that the angle is difficult to judge. By the end of this time the student should have acquired a fair mastery of this valuable shot, and will have thus secured a knowledge which will prove of the utmost value to him, for by now he should be able to make the half-ball shots with almost absolute certainty from all positions, an achievement which many players are never able to accomplish, and which must take years to learn by simply playing games.

When the losing hazards can be played with confidence and can be obtained five times out of every six attempts, the Winning Hazards (page 16) can be taken in hand. At first these should be attempted with the object-ball close

to a pocket, and with the cue-ball not far from the object-ball. Gradually these distances can be increased, first that between the object-ball and the pocket, then that between the cue-ball and object-ball, and finally both distances should be extended. All kinds of positions should be adopted for the placing of both the balls, and middle pockets as well as corner pockets should be used. A good hazard stroke for practice is where the object-ball is either close to or touching a cushion, and also where the contact has to consist of a very fine cut. In this practice the after-position of the cue-ball must always be considered, an endeavour being made to leave either another winning hazard or a half-ball loser. A fortnight at least should be devoted to this section, but during this time long and short losers must also receive a small portion of attention.

After this the three balls may now be brought into play in the practice of cannons of various kinds. In practising these only easy positions should be at first attempted, but gradually more difficult strokes can be attempted. In all cases, however, they should be plain, half-ball cannons, cushion cannons, run-throughs, etc., being left entirely alone for the present. The useful drop cannon, however, must be included, and must always be played with just sufficient strength to bring all three balls together at the top of the table, as I have described. Position from cannons is often difficult to judge, especially with the balls wide apart, but, if possible, the red ball should always be left in the vicinity of a top pocket. In making cannons the degree of contact on to the second

object-ball should always be considered, as sometimes position will require that this should be either thin or full—sometimes on the outside and sometimes on the inside. Cannons are certainly not so important as either winning or losing hazards, but still demand a fair amount of practice, and two or three weeks may be devoted to them most profitably.

The student will now have been practising the game for from two to three months, and will have received a most valuable grounding in all the plain strokes, which, indeed, form quite three-fourths of the play. After a full knowledge of these has been secured you can commence to practise strokes played with side, screw shots, jennies, run-through shots, forcing shots, and strokes played with drag and top. Each of these should be practised for a few days exclusively, and after the whole list has been exhausted not a day should pass without a few minutes being devoted to each kind of stroke.

After this a couple of days should be devoted each to cushion cannons, run-through cannons, stun shots, etc., and then you will be ready to commence your course of all-round practice. Having devoted considerable time to individual shots you should next proceed to practise the combinations of these shots and the making of breaks. In doing this you must still be sure to bear in mind all you have learnt regarding attitude, striking the ball, etc., but if you have paid proper attention to these points all along you should by now do them correctly almost without thinking. In practising breaks it is more essential than ever that you should play every stroke only after

having considered what position you intend to leave. Indeed, you should so accustom yourself to seeing in your mind's eye not only what the next shot shall be but also what the next after that shall consist of, that you will often be able to look several strokes ahead. By doing this you will soon find that, in comparison, the mere leaving position for the next shot will be quite simple, and you will begin to wonder why you ever considered it difficult.

A good method of practising breaks is to play an imaginary game with yourself, first using one ball and keeping on with this until you fail to score, then doing similarly with the other ball. Additional interest may be given to this practice if sometimes you keep count of your score, and of the number of times you go to the table, and in this way make a note of your average. You can also practise breaks by placing one object-ball for a loser into a middle pocket, and the other ball for a loser into the other middle pocket, and then see how many you can score off this position.

On arriving at the stage where you begin to practise breaks you can advantageously join your friends in the playing of games. I would advise you not to do this while simply practising strokes alone, as it is liable to divide your attention, and also to involve the playing of shots which as yet you have not systematically studied and practised.

With regard to the length of time that should be devoted to practice, this, of course, will depend largely upon the circumstances and opportunities of the student,

but in no case should it be less than two hours daily for the first six months and one hour daily for another six months. If possible, two, or even three hours daily should be given to the game for a year, and if this is done, and the whole of the instructions I have given are faithfully observed, I can guarantee that the student will make far more progress in this time than he would by the ordinary method of playing games in ten years. There are many amateurs who dread the idea of solitary practice, saying that they could never have patience enough for it, and looking upon it as an extremely tiring and trying procedure. All I can say is, that if you really wish to excel, and to become proficient in the shortest possible time, solitary practice is an absolute necessity; and so far as its being tedious or uninteresting is concerned, this is purely imaginary. At first it may possibly appear somewhat monotonous and dull, but if you will only persevere for a week or two this feeling will entirely disappear, and soon this practice by yourself, instead of being a bore, will become most fascinating. For my own part I would even now far rather have a quiet hour's practice alone than take part in a game, much as I enjoy the latter; and I can imagine no greater pleasure than practising jennies, run-throughs, screws, or any of the other strokes of the game for half-an-hour or so. When you join a friend in a game, the part you prefer is naturally that during which you yourself are at the table. Well, when you are practising alone you are at the table all the time, and it is that which makes it so fascinating. Only make up your mind to persevere for a few weeks, and I guarantee that after

that you will look forward each day to your practices with absolute pleasure. Do not be too eager to get ahead, but be content to go slowly at first, and to master one detail thoroughly before passing on to the next. If you will only do this your success is assured, and even if you have already had considerable experience of the game you will find a vast improvement in your game will be the result of your adoption of this systematic course.

It may possibly be thought by some that I take too serious a view of the game, and that I am too exacting in my requirements as to the amount of attention which the student should devote to it. But it must be remembered that billiards is no mere child's play. It is far the most difficult of all games, and demands a degree of skill and manual dexterity which can only be acquired by long practice and experience; but there can never be a doubt that the supreme delight which invariably attends proficiency at the game always brings ample compensation for the care and trouble necessarily involved.

APPENDIX
AN EPOCH-MAKING INVENTION
BY WALLACE RITCHIE

(*Reprinted from "THE NEW WORLD OF BILLIARDS,"
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Now and then, but generally at extremely rare intervals, an event will take place in the history of any art which will be unique, and which will stand out with such prominence as to render it a land-mark from which all minor occurrences will be dated and calculated.

The events which form such land-marks in the history of the art of billiards—and I think I am perfectly justified in looking upon billiards as an art—consists of the introduction of the slate bed of the table in the place of the old-fashioned wooden one; the substitution of rubber for list as a material for the cushions, and the adoption of the cue in place of the mace. It is now a great many years since the date when the latest of these important innovations came into being, and although steady improvement has been constantly going on in connexion with all the implements of the game, it was little thought that any development would arise which would be of sufficient significance to entitle it to be looked upon as an epoch-making event. And yet I have not the slightest

hesitation in saying that such a development has actually just been brought to light, and I firmly believe that the future billiard historian will rank this as, if not the greatest, at least one of the most important red-letter events which has ever taken place in connexion with the game.

I refer to the introduction by Messers. Burroughes and Watts of what they call the "Inflexible" cue. The cue is without doubt one of the most important implements of the game, and notwithstanding the high degree of finish which has been attained in the manufacture of this article it has been felt that there was a great want of something still more perfect. The ordinary cue, however well it may be made, however excellent may be the material, and however thoroughly it may be seasoned, is always a very uncertain quantity. To be a really perfect implement, a cue must possess several essential features, which are but rarely found in combination.

In the first place it must be perfectly straight, and that to a degree of mathematical exactness which but very seldom exists. A cue may, and generally does, provide this feature at the time it is made, but it may be said without fear of contradiction that scarcely one in five hundred will remain straight after having been in actual use for a few months.

Then again, to be anything approaching perfection, a cue must be thoroughly well balanced, and here we meet with a difficulty which is far greater than is generally supposed. In order to be brought up to an adequate weight a cue has to be enlarged at its butt-end, or spliced with a heavier wood. This means that the cue, in far the majority

of cases, is much too heavy at the portion which comes behind the bridge, and too light at its important fore-end.

But, important indeed as are these features of straightness and balance, there is a further point in connexion with cues which, though not so generally recognised, is of quite equal urgency, namely, rigidity. To be reliable in action and to produce the best results, the thin portion of the cue should be perfectly firm and stiff. If there is the slightest tendency to quivering on the stroke, much of the power that is put into it is wasted so that especially for hard and forcing shots, there should not be the least liability of the cue to bend or vibrate at the moment the stroke is delivered.

It will thus be seen that there are three main points which are necessary in a cue, and so rarely are these found combined that many of the professional players will tell you that they have never yet been able to discover a really perfect cue. At one time, the late William Cook possessed a cue which he prized so highly that on more than one occasion he stated, in all sincerity, that he would not sell it for five hundred pounds, which goes far to prove how rare a thing is a really good cue in every respect.

I have personally had the privilege of minutely examining the "Inflexible" cue above mentioned. I have been shown sections of it, and have had every opportunity to thoroughly consider its merits and special features; and I say without hesitation that its introduction will cause nothing less than an entire revolution with regard to the cue of the future. The *modus operandi* of this invention is as follows. For a distance of about fourteen inches from its

tip end a hole of about a quarter of an inch in diameter is bored. Into the whole length of this hole is fitted a cross section of flat steel, the interstices of which are filled in with split bamboo. The whole of this steel and bamboo is fixed securely together, and fitted firmly into the hole in the cue by means of a specially prepared solution which neither shrinks nor allows the steel section to become loose. The advantages gained by this ingenious device are three-fold. The cue is rendered mathematically straight and cannot possibly warp; it is made perfectly rigid; and the invention furthermore exactly provides that small extra weight at the thin end which is so extremely necessary to secure a proper balance. With these three advantages so effectually secured, what more can possibly be desired? Theoretically, the principles of this invention are beyond doubt, and I am convinced that in the years to come experience will prove that it is equally excellent from the practical point of view.

I do not know at what price Messrs Burroughes and Watts are selling the "Inflexible" cue, but whatever this may be it will be money well spent, and I would certainly advise every enthusiastic player to secure one of these implements at the earliest possible moment. To play with a really good cue not only ensures a far greater degree of skill, but also adds an interest to the game which is almost boundless.

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